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Learning Partners

A Guide to Educational Activities for Families

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U.S. Department of Education
Richard W. Riley
Secretary

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Ramon C. Cortines
Acting Assistant Secretary

Media and Information Services
Cynthia Hearn Dorfman
Director

May 1997

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Some of the *Learning Partners* factsheets that appear in this booklet are also available in Spanish. To order, write the National Library of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20208–5721; or call NLE at 1–800–424–1616.

Other materials from the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning—for families, schools, employers, and community groups—can be obtained by calling the U.S. Department of Education at 1–800–USA–LEARN. This includes information on the AMERICA READS CHALLENGE and the summer component *READ*WRITE*NOW*. The AMERICA READS CHALLENGE is the President's initiative to ensure that all children can read well and independently by the end of the third grade. As part of that initiative, the *READ*WRITE*NOW* program is designed to provide summer reading opportunities for all children with the help of community volunteers.

Also check the U.S. Department of Education's Web site: http://www.ed.gov

Many other federal publications on learning activities for children are available through the *Consumer Information Catalog*. For a free *Catalog*, write the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colorado 81009. Or visit their Web site at: http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov

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Dear Learning Partner:

We know from education research that children from families who are involved in and supportive of their education tend to perform well in school.

To help spark family involvement, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement has consolidated its *Learning Partners* series into one booklet called *Learning Partners: A Guide to Educational Activities for Families*. It is designed primarily for families with preschool and elementary school-age children, although some of the material is useful for older children.

The *Learning Partners* series covers a lot of topics: reading, math, science, geography, history, writing, responsible behavior, and many more. For each topic, there are activities that you can do with your children to reinforce learning. Most are simple, everyday activities. For instance, you and your children may want to:

- read aloud together—there is no more effective way to encourage children to love books and reading than by reading aloud to them;
- sort the socks on laundry day—sorting is a major function in math; or
- discuss how you think the clock works, why birds build nests, how electricity helps us—science is everywhere and it's important to share the knowledge we have.

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We hope your family has fun doing the activities and develops many more of its own. We've heard from a number of schools across the country saying that they pass out *Learning Partners* sheets at "Family Night," reprint them in newsletters, and send them home with children. As you know, by doing things together, you can show your children that learning is fun and important.

Ramon C. Cortines
Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational
Research and Improvement

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Learning Partners

Let's Read!

When parents help their children learn to read, they open the door to a big, exciting world. As a parent, you can begin an endless learning chain like this: You read to your children, they develop a love of stories and poems, they want to read on their own, they practice reading, and finally, they read for their own information or pleasure. When children become readers, their world is forever wider and richer.

Here are some things you can do:

- Read aloud to your child: books, newspaper and magazine articles, the back of the cereal box, labels on cans, or directions.
- Read poems aloud together to learn about rhythm and repeated sounds in language.
- Point to the words on the page when you read. Move your finger from left to right.
- Listen to your child read homework or favorite stories to you everyday.
- Go to the library together and check out books. Be sure to ask the librarian for good books or to help you find what you need.
- Have books, magazines, and papers around the house, and let your child see that you like to read, too.
- Encourage older children to read to younger children.
- Help experienced readers talk and write about what they read.

Reading Activities

Over and Over Again

for young children

1. Pick a story or poem that repeats phrases. "Assign" your child a phrase to repeat each time you read a new part of the story.
2. Read a short portion of the story or poem, then stop and let your child repeat the phrase.
3. Encourage your child to act out the story.

For example, with the story of the "Three Little Pigs:"

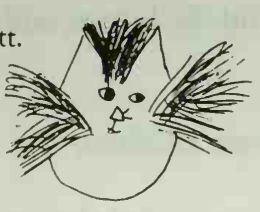
Wolf (parent):	Little pig, little pig, Let me come in.
Little Pig (child):	Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin!
Wolf (parent):	Then I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!

Make Sense of Sounds

for beginning readers

1. Look for poems or tongue twisters that repeat sounds and letters.
2. Point out these sounds and letters, and explain that they often make the same sound whenever you see them with other letters on the page. For example:

There once was a **fat cat** named Matt.
And a black **cat** who had a big bat.
The **rat** put a **t**ack
When the **cat** turned his back
On the **m**at where the black **cat** sat.

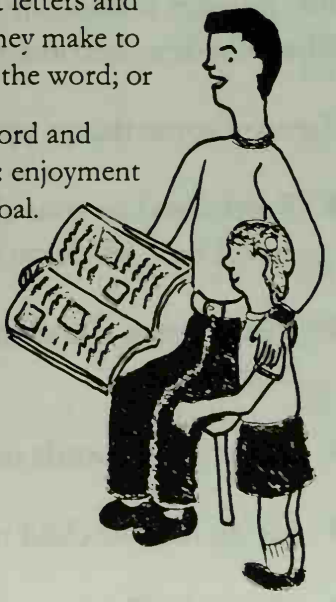


A **b**ig **b**lue **b**arrel of **b**ig **b**lue **b**lueberries.
Does this shop sell socks with spots?

Read Together

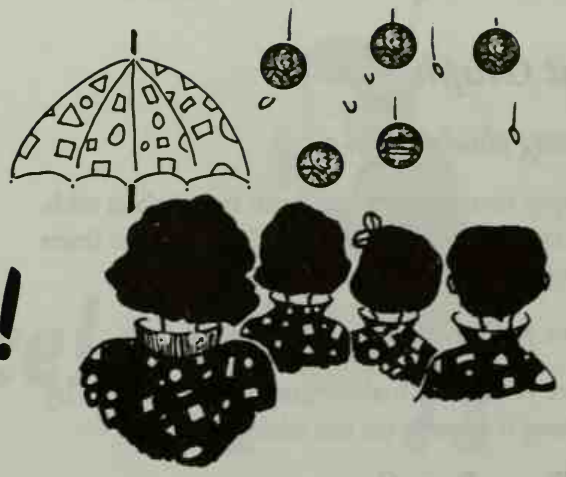
for more advanced readers

1. Ask your child to read to you.
2. Take turns. You read a paragraph and your child can read the next one, or take turns reading full pages one after the other. Keep in mind that your child may be concentrating on *how* to read, and your reading helps to keep the story alive.
3. If your child has trouble reading words, you can help in several ways:
   - have your child skip over the word, read the rest of the sentence, and ask what word would make sense in the story;
   - have your child use what is known about letters and the sounds they make to "sound out" the word; or
   - supply the word and keep reading: enjoyment is the main goal.



Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Learn To Read,* U.S. Department of Education, and material from the Literacy Council of Alaska.

Learning Partners



Let's Do Math!

Math is a very important part of life. We use math to set an alarm clock, buy groceries, keep score or time at a game, wallpaper a room, or wrap a present. We all need math in the world of computers and electronic communication. It is important to encourage children to think of themselves as mathematicians who can reason and solve problems.

Here are some things you can do:

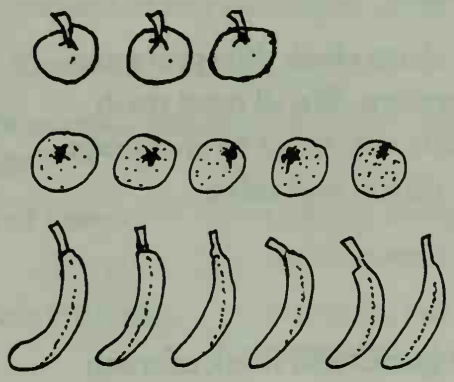
- Show your children that you like numbers. Play number games and think of math problems as puzzles to be solved.
- From the time your child is very young, count everything. When you empty a grocery bag, count the number of apples. Count the number of stairs to your home.
- Put things into groups. When you do laundry, separate items of clothing: all the socks in one pile, shirts in another, and pants in another. Divide the socks by color and count the number of each. Draw pictures and graphs of clothes in the laundry: 4 red socks, 10 blue socks, 12 white socks.
- Tell your children that anyone can learn math. Point out numbers in your child's life: in terms of weight (pounds and ounces), measurements involving cooking, temperature, and time.
- Help your children do math in their heads with lots of small numbers. Ask questions: "If I have 4 cups and I need 7, how many more do I need?" or "If I need 12 drinks for the class, how many packages of 3 drinks will I need?"

Math Activities

Fruit Graph

for young children

1. Empty your grocery bag onto the kitchen table or counter and have your child group the fruits by type: apples, bananas, oranges, etc.
2. Have your child count each type of fruit.
3. Have your child make a graph with the fruit by putting it in rows on the table:



Money Match 10¢

for beginning mathematicians

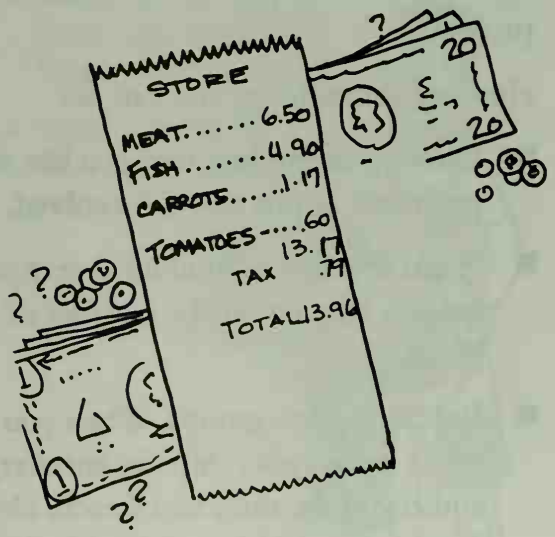
1. The object of the game is to be the first player to earn a set amount (for example, 20 or 50 cents).
2. Each player rolls the dice and gets the number of pennies of the number shown on the dice.
3. As each player gets 5 pennies, the pennies are replaced by a nickel, and 10 pennies are replaced by a dime.
4. The first player to reach the set amount wins.

1¢ 5¢

List It

for more advanced mathematicians

1. Give your child the grocery section of the newspaper.
2. Have your child make up a grocery list that will feed the family for a day and cost a specific amount of budgeted money.
3. Have your child add up the prices of all the items.
4. If the total for the groceries is too great, talk about what items could be taken away.
5. Talk about the nutritional balance of the items selected. What is the ratio of sweets to vegetables?



Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Learn Math*, U.S. Department of Education.

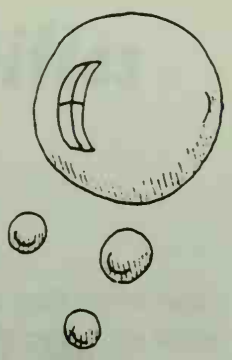
Let's Do Science!

When you learn science you build on what you already know. Children need to start learning early, at home, so that they have a firm base of knowledge to build on when they get to school. As parents, what's important is that we share the knowledge we have with our children. Science is in everyday activities: cooking, washing dishes, growing plants. So, look around the house and out the windows and see that science is everywhere.

Here are some things you can do:

- Ask your children questions: How do you think the clock works? Why does a bird make a nest and what is the nest made of? How does electricity help us everyday?
- Have children look at what's happening around them and have them write down what they see.
- Have your children make predictions about the weather or how fast a plant will grow or how high a piece of paper will fly with the wind. Have your children then test to see if their hunches are correct.
- Remind your child that it may take many tries before you get an answer. Keep trying.
- Have your children start collections of shells, rocks, or bugs, so that they can see similarities and patterns.
- Have your child look at how things are different. He or she can look around the neighborhood to see the different animals and plants that live and grow there.
- Help your child look at what causes things to change. What happens when a plant doesn't have water or sunlight?

Science Activities

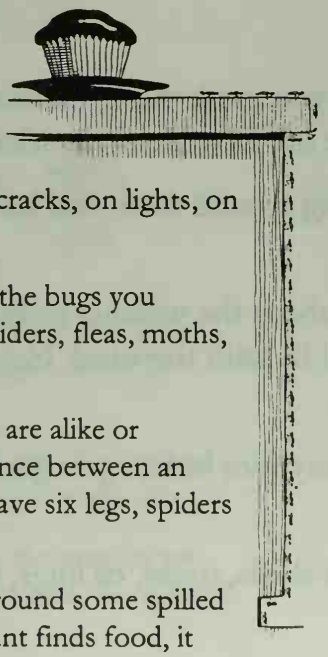


Bubbles

for young children

1. Mix 8 tablespoons of dishwashing liquid in 1 quart of water in a shallow pan.
2. Blow through a straw as you move it slowly across the top of the liquid.
3. When you've made a bubble, touch it gently with a wet finger. What happens? Touch another bubble with a dry finger. What happens?
4. Look at the bubbles. How many colors do you see? What do the colors remind you of?

Creepy Crawlies!



for beginning scientists

1. Search for bugs: in sidewalk cracks, on lights, on animals, or on plants.
2. Tell your child the names of the bugs you found. Did you find: ants, spiders, fleas, moths, flies, ladybugs?
3. Ask your child how the bugs are alike or different. Explain the difference between an insect and a spider (insects have six legs, spiders have eight), for example.
4. Watch ants in an anthill or around some spilled food. Explain that when an ant finds food, it runs back to the hill to "tell" the others. As it runs, it leaves a trail that other ants in the hill can smell. The ants find the food by smelling their way along the trail.

Plants and Light

for more advanced scientists

1. Cut 3 paper shapes about 2 inches large. Circles and triangles work well, but you can use other shapes, too.
2. Clip these shapes with paper clips to 3 leaves of either an indoor or an outdoor plant, being careful not to tear the leaves.
3. Keep 1 piece of paper on the leaf for 1 day, a second on for 2 days, and the third on for one week.
4. Watch to see what happens to the leaves. Do they change color? What effect does the lack of light have on them? What effect does the length of time the leaves are covered have on them?

Note: Plants use sunlight to turn carbon dioxide (in the air) and water into food.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Learn Science,* U.S. Department of Education.

Learning Partners

Let's Succeed in School!

To succeed in school, parents need to be involved in their children's learning. It's important to be involved early, and it's important to stay involved. Learning the skills for success takes place at home as well as at school. Here are some of the things that parents can do at home and at school.

At Home

- Ask questions about things your children are learning and doing, and encourage them to give you lengthy answers.
- Keep books, magazines, and newspapers available. Use them yourself to show you value learning, too.
- Have paper, pencils, crayons, and washable markers handy. This encourages children to practice writing.
- Watch TV with your children, talk with them about the things you like and dislike about the shows. Be sure to limit viewing time.
- Have a special place for studying that is quiet and free of distractions.
- Expect your children to succeed in school. Encourage them with praise for hard work and a job well done.

At School

- Share information with teachers so that both you and they know what is happening in school and at home.
- Tell teachers what they need to know about your child. Make special needs known immediately.
- Work as a partner with the teacher to help your child want to learn, gain self-confidence, and succeed in school.

Activities for Success

What Do You Hear?

for young children
(K–2nd grade)

Listening is a skill that young children need to succeed in school.

1. Make up a story. You make up one sentence, and then your child makes up one sentence. Repeat until you're ready to end it.
2. With a group, all but one person close their eyes. The person with eyes open makes a sound (with keys, paper, a spoon tapping a glass) that everyone else tries to guess.
3. Clap your hands to tap out a rhythm. Have your child listen and then clap that same rhythm back to you.

Where Did I Put That?

for beginning students
(2nd–4th grade)

Being organized will help a child control his or her learning activities. This will increase your child's self-confidence.

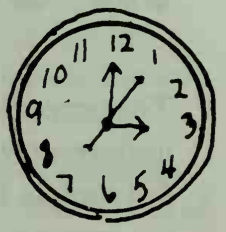
1. Turn a cardboard box (big enough for notebooks) into a special school box to hold all school things when your child comes home. The box would keep homework, books, supplies, hats, gloves, and other things needed for the next school day.
2. Have your child decorate the box with pictures, words, or artwork and his or her name to make it his own. Each child in the family can have a separate box.

A Daily Family Routine

for more advanced students
(4th–6th grade)

The goal is to encourage children to be self-reliant while having structure and rules. Family members can provide the structure and work together to set the rules.

1. Assign chores and household tasks.
2. Encourage good health habits (proper rest and exercise, nutrition, and regular meal schedules).
3. Eat meals together.
4. Have a firm bedtime.

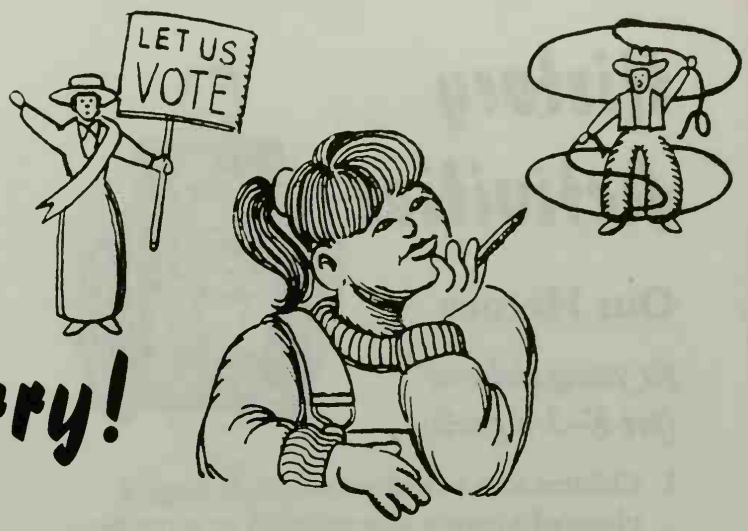


How Much Time Will It Take?

Before your child starts a project, plan out how long it will take to do each step.

1. Choose a big assignment to talk about, such as a research project. Write down the steps needed to complete the job.
2. Work backwards from when the project is due. Estimate how long each step will take and decide when that step must be started to meet the deadline. Put start and finish dates next to these steps.
3. Arrange the steps of the assignment on a calendar or homework chart.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Succeed in School; Strong Families, Strong Schools;* and *Hard Work and Higher Expectations,* U.S. Department of Education.



Let's Do History!

When your children ask, "Where was I born?" and "How old was I when I started walking?" they are asking questions about history. These two questions contain the two main meanings of "history":

1. the *story* of people and events and

2. the *record* of times past.

History helps us understand the past and how we got here.

Here are some things you can do at home.

- Share family history with your children. Share your memories, and help your relatives and friends share family stories, too. Encourage your children to tell their own stories.

- Read with your child about people and events that have made a difference in the world. Help your child pick others you both find interesting to learn more about.

- Watch television programs about topics related to the past with your children. Get library books on the same topics. Ask the librarian for help. Do the books and television programs agree?

- When you celebrate holidays such as the Fourth of July, Christmas, Passover, or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, explain to your child what is being celebrated and why. Help your child find stories or speeches about these holidays at the library or in a newspaper or magazine.

- Get to know the history of the town or city where you live. Your newspaper may list parades, museum and art exhibits, children's theater, music events, history talks and walks under "things to do." Choose some of these activities to do with your children.

History Activities

Our Heroes

for young children (pre-K–3rd grade)

1. Children love to look at pictures. Choose a photo of a person in your family or someone else you admire or respect.
2. Tell your child what the person did. Why do you admire this person? Talk about the results of the person's actions.
3. With your child, search for photos from newspapers or magazines about other people you admire. Your child might want to collect these or put them in a scrapbook.
4. Find a story about one or more of these people at the library. Be sure to ask the librarian to help you find what you need.

Time Capsule

for older children and the whole family (3rd–6th grade)

1. Have children collect *pictures* and some *examples* of a few important things from their life. Explain to them that items will be put in a time capsule so that when people find the capsule later, they can learn something about your children and the time they lived in.
2. Examples might include lists of slang words, current events, popular movies, heroes, games, and toys. You might also include ads of popular items cut out of magazines or newspapers, descriptions of television shows, pictures of popular fashions, as well as copies of poetry and speeches.
3. Have your children write and include a letter about life today to the person who opens the time capsule.
4. Have a "show and tell" of all the items. Talk with your children about what has been chosen and why. Is everyone satisfied?
5. Label all the items by name and add any other important information about the item to the label.
6. Place the items in a container, seal the container, and find a place to store it.

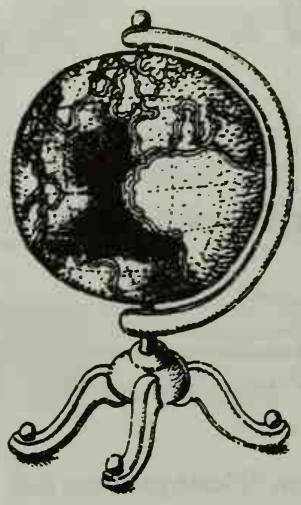
Architecture All Around

for older children (4th–6th grades)

1. When you are walking in your town or city with your child, look at the buildings.
2. Talk about ways old buildings differ from those built today and why. Are new buildings different from what you remember when you were a child?
3. Look up architectural terms such as Romanesque, Georgian, Palladian, Bauhaus. What do they mean? When were they invented? Who were they named after? Can you find examples of these styles in your town?

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Learn History,* U.S. Department of Education.

Let's Do Geography!



Geography is the study of Planet Earth. When we study geography we look at where things are (places) and their natural surroundings (settings). Geography covers such things as climate, plants, animals, and natural resources (physical characteristics) that affect the Earth, as well as how people affect it. Geographers ask and answer such questions as "Where is something? Why is it there? How does it relate to other things?"

Here are some geography questions you can discuss with your child:

- Where are we? Teach your child your address. Look at maps together to see where you live and where the school is. How close or far are you from the school?
- What makes a place special? List some things about where you live. What is the climate like? What kinds of plants and animals live in your part of the country?
- What impact have people had on where you live? Decide whether you live in a city, the suburbs, a town, or the country. Are there many wild animals where you live?
- How do things—people, goods, information—move from place to place where you live? List all the places your food comes from. If you looked at the whole earth, how would you divide it up to study—by location on the map, by languages spoken, by type of weather, or by type of plants and animals? Think of other places in the country and the world that are like where you live.
- What does it mean to live in a global society? Make a chart of the things that are happening in other parts of the world that affect you.
- Where is it? When you talk with your child, use words that indicate direction: "We are going north to New York to visit Grandma," or "The school is three blocks west of our apartment building."

Geography Activities

Everything in Its Place

for pre-schoolers

1. When you talk with your children, use words like "above" and "below" to let them know where things are.
2. When picking up toys, say, "Please put your doll in the basket on the *right*." or, "The frog goes on the *left* side of the shelf."
3. When talking about things, describe the color, size, and shape. These words are used in geography, too.

Build a Block

for young children (K–3rd grade)

Make a three-dimensional map of your home or neighborhood using milk cartons, small boxes, and toilet paper or paper towel rolls for buildings. You can do it this way:

1. Draw a map of the block on a large piece of paper, a cut open paper bag, or a piece of cardboard.
2. Cut up the milk cartons or other boxes and place them on the block where the buildings are.
3. Use bottle tops, pieces of fabric, paper, or yarn to show other things on your block such as fences, sidewalks, trees, cars, trucks, or mailboxes.

What's the Weather Like?

for older children (4th–6th grade)

1. Watch the weather forecast on television or read the weather map in the newspaper.
2. Write down the forecasts for a week or more or save the maps.
3. Look for the changes in the weather over time.
4. Compare the weather in your town to the weather in other parts of the country.
5. How will the weather in another part of the country affect what is happening in your area?

Possible Sources of Maps: *Local Chambers of Commerce, Newspapers, Public Transportation Headquarters, & Telephone Books.*

Resources: Information was based on *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards, 1994,* National Geographic Research & Exploration, and *Helping Your Child Learn Geography,* U.S. Department of Education.

Being Responsible

We all want our children to grow up to be responsible adults. We want them to feel, think, and act with respect for themselves and for others. To do this, children need lots of help from parents. Learning to be responsible includes learning to:

- show respect and compassion for others,
- practice honesty,
- show courage by standing up for what we believe,
- develop self-control out of consideration for others,
- maintain self-respect.

Here are some things you can do at home:

- Watch for the chance to teach your children responsible behavior through everyday situations. Share your moral and religious values with them.
- Show compassion and concern when others are suffering.
- Read stories together that teach lessons: the courage of David standing up to Goliath, or the value of persistence from "The Little Engine That Could."
- Talk about complicated decisions. Help children understand how the choices they make will affect them and others.
- Visit with teachers to discuss ways parents and the school can reinforce the same lessons about good character.
- Talk with other parents and agree on acceptable behavior for children's play and parties. Take turns supervising to show that all the parents agree on the standards of behavior.

Responsibility Builders

Honesty, the Best Policy

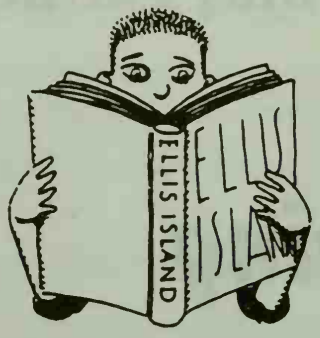
for young children

1. Tell the story about the boy who cried "Wolf!" He did it so many times to get attention that when the wolf did come, no one believed him.
2. Ask your children if anyone had ever lied to them. How did *that* make them feel?
3. When you make a promise to your children, try to keep it. It may seem small to you, but it means a lot to them.

Helping Out

for older children

1. As children grow older, think of added ways they can help at home.
2. Discuss the new duties with them. Avoid making the duties seem like a punishment. Instead, you might say they require more ability which your child now has.
3. New tasks should stretch a child's abilities and make him or her feel satisfied with doing good work. Praise a job well done, especially a new challenge.



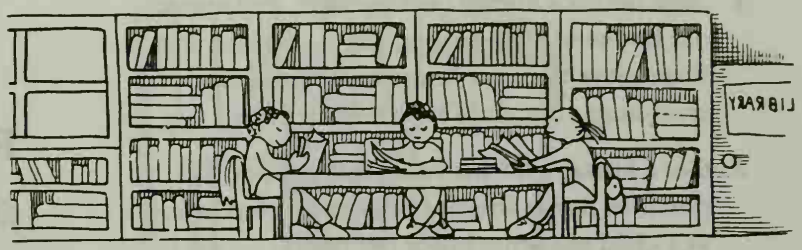
Getting to Know Others

for children of all ages

1. Set a good example. Act with respect toward others. Always make clear that prejudice is wrong and that all of us are equal, no matter what our color, gender, or background is.
2. Show an interest in learning about and from others—neighbors and relatives, and from books about our own and other civilizations.
3. Encourage your child to learn about many different lands and people, to learn another language, and to read stories about children from all over the world. Show your child how you try to see things from others' point of view.
4. Listen carefully when your child wants to tell you things they have discovered about history, geography, religions, art, and ways of life.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Learn Responsible Behavior,* U.S. Department of Education.

Let's Use the Library!



Most public libraries offer a wide variety of children's books and magazines, with many in Spanish and other languages. In addition to printed materials, libraries often lend audiotapes and videocassettes of childrens' books and movies, and more libraries are making computers available to the public. Many libraries also sponsor special programs, including children's story hours, summer reading programs, and homework help. If your child has special needs, be sure to ask about services the library offers for the blind, the deaf, and those who are gifted or need remedial help. Many libraries have specially trained librarians for children. Feel free to ask them for help.

Here are some things you can do to introduce your child to the library:

- Include children—even toddlers—in trips to the library, and go often.
- As soon as you can, help your child get a library card.
- Borrow recordings of children's stories and songs, cassette tapes, compact discs, videotapes, even puppets and educational toys.
- Find out if your library has computers and how your children can use them to learn or upgrade skills.
- Encourage your children to use the library to find information for their homework.
- Encourage your children to ask for help from you and the librarian in finding books and materials.
- Work with the librarian to teach older children how to find things in the library on their own.
- Teach your children how to take care of themselves in public places, especially if they use the library alone. Stress common sense guidelines for behavior in the library.

Library Activities

Become a Member

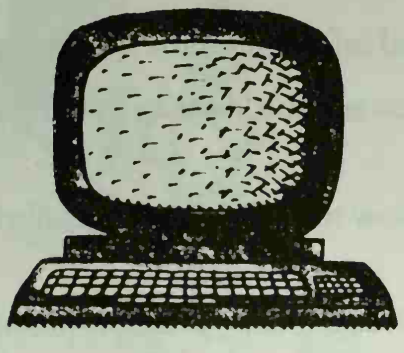
for young children

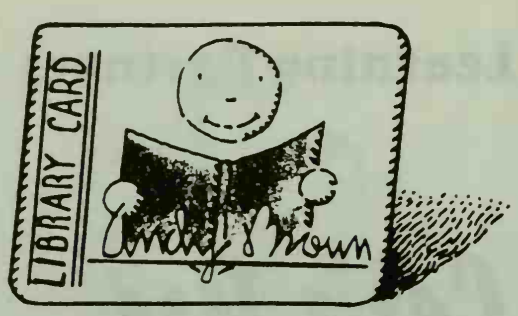
1. Sign up for a library card yourself, and check out books to learn stories, songs, rhymes, and fingerplays to use at home to stimulate and encourage your child's development.
2. Get a library card for your child as soon as possible. Some libraries will issue a card as soon as a child can write his or her name.
3. Encourage your child to check out books. This can encourage responsibility, too.
4. Take your child to the library for special programs.

Get Into the Act

for elementary school children

1. Get your child into reading programs at the library. Many children earn certificates or other awards for reading books through special library programs.
2. Visit your children's school library, meet the librarian, and see what it has to offer. Help out with any book fairs the school sponsors. You'll learn a lot about children's literature that way.
3. Enroll your child in computer courses the library may offer.





Reference Desk

for more advanced students

1. Encourage your children to use the library for schoolwork. Help them determine if the library has the resources they need or if they need to check other information sources.
2. Give your children encouragement, advice, and a ride if they need it, but resist the temptation to take over an assignment. Let your children be responsible for researching and writing reports.
3. Check out the special services your library offers for helping students with school assignments, such as homework hotlines and term paper clinics.
4. Build up your personal library by getting books for 50 cents or $1.00 at yard sales.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Use the Library*, U.S. Department of Education.

Let's Write!

One of the most important parts of knowing how to write well is to feel comfortable doing it. The magic in writing comes from the ideas you have. Let ideas flow, as they would if you were talking. The beauty of the written word is that you can always go back and make changes: rearrange the ideas, correct the spelling, add new ideas, take out ideas that don't fit. The important thing is to think of writing as a reflection of your thoughts.

Here are some things you can do:

- Show that you write often to make lists, take down messages, write notes to the school, write letters to friends.
- Write to your child: put a note in a lunch bag, make a birthday poster, send a postcard from work.
- Encourage your young children to get ready to write. They can scribble, draw pictures, make designs with letters.
- Play writing and spelling games: have family spelling bees, do crossword puzzles, play scrabble, play waiter or waitress.
- Explain that math problems are a form of writing. 2 + 3 = 5 is a sentence.
- Talk about why people write. Are they giving step-by-step instructions, telling a story according to when the events happened, describing how something looks, or trying to convince someone to do something?

Writing Activities

Scribble Scrabble

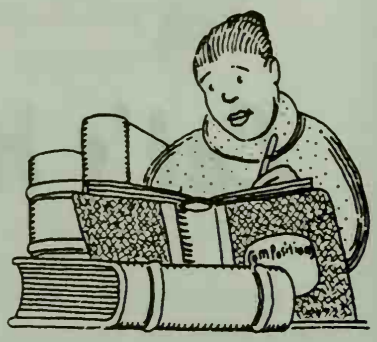
for young children

1. Pick some of your child's favorite animals, book or television characters, or people he or she knows to write about.
2. Plan a story, talking about what happens to the characters.
3. Ask your child questions: "What happens after Jose finds the magic box?" "What do you think Emily would do to get away from the bear?"
4. Have your child write down the story in comfortable ways, using scribbling that looks like writing, using letters and words that he invents, filling in pictures for words.

Investigative Reporting

for more advanced writers

1. Have your child gather information by interviewing someone in your family or your neighborhood.
2. Together, choose questions for the interview. Did the person live during a particularly exciting time in history? Did he or she accomplish a major achievement? What does the person do for a living?
3. Look at examples of written interviews in magazines. Using this format, have your child write down the responses from the interview.
4. Have your child edit the interview to cut out ideas that are repeated, to remove halting phrases such as "uh," or "you know", or to put the information in order by topic (sometimes when people talk, they jump back and forth from topic to topic)



Read What You Write

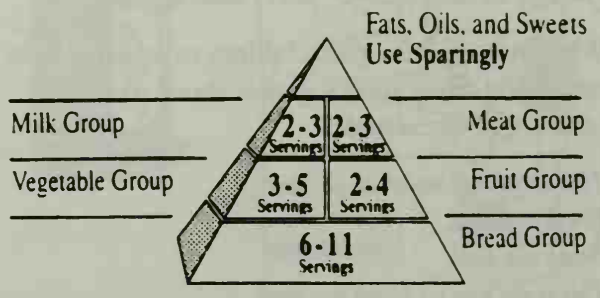
for writers of any age

1. Reading and writing go hand in hand. Have your child read school assignments aloud.
2. Explain that when you read, you should listen to how the writing sounds by asking yourself
   - Does the writing sound the way people talk?
   - Is it smooth or choppy?
   - Are there any words or ideas missing?
   - How could the writing be made more interesting? By adding descriptions, using examples, going into more detail with explanations?
3. Encourage your child to read with expression, emphasizing the words in the sentences that are most important to your child.
4. Encourage other children who might be listening to ask questions about the writing.

Resources: Information was based on research by the the National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy and the *Helping Your Child* series of books for parents, U.S. Department of Education.

Learning Partners

Let's Be Healthy!



Good health comes from good habits and wise choices. To enjoy good health now and in the future, youngsters must learn how to exercise, control stress, be clean, and reduce the risk of disease. They must get into the habit of eating nutritious foods, having plenty of sleep, and understanding how physical and emotional health are related. Children also need to know what to do in an emergency and when to say "no." When children are healthy they will probably do well in school.

Following good health practices will help children be ready to learn:

- Pick nutritious foods and limit sugary snacks and fatty foods, particularly before meals. Set a good example by eating healthy foods, too.
- Have your child start the day by eating a healthy breakfast at home or at school.
- Check on the food programs at your school and ask for improvement if you think it is needed.
- Teach your child how to stop the spread of germs by keeping clean and washing hands before meals.
- Make sure your child is vaccinated against disease at the right age. Keep a chart of the shots your child has already had.
- Encourage your child to exercise: jogging, walking, jumping rope, bicycling, roller-skating, dancing, and swimming.
- Teach your child how to handle stress through exercise, getting enough sleep, discussing problems, and breaking jobs down into small parts.
- Teach your child how to protect him/herself by saying "no," walking away from fights, or talking about dangerous situations.

Healthy Activities

Brushhh

for young children 2–5 years old

1. When it is time for your children to brush their teeth, sing a silly song together about tooth brushing. For example:

   This is the way we brush our teeth,
   Brush our teeth,
   Brush our teeth.
   This is the way we brush our teeth,
   So early in the morning!

2. Make sound effects: "ZOOM, ZOOM, ZOOM or VROOM, VROOM, VROOM," while you watch them brush.

3. Have your children give their teeth names, and use these names when you talk about them."Now don't forget Cutters, Doggies, and Chompers!"

To Share or Not To Share

for children pre-school–2nd grade

Help your child understand that there are some personal things that we don't share because they can spread germs and disease.

1. Have your child collect pictures of a toothbrush, cup, comb, hairbrush, and spoon.
2. Ask your child to paste the pictures on a large piece of paper.
3. With a crayon, pencil, or marker, have your child put an X or \ through each picture.
4. Title the poster, "Things I Do Not Share."
5. Have your child collect pictures of things that are safe to share with others.
6. Use these pictures to make a poster with the title, "Things I Can Share."

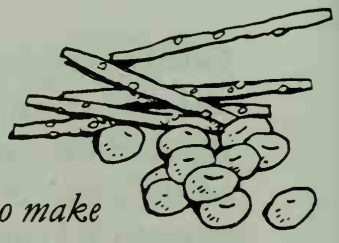
Food Pyramid

for children of all ages

It is important that children eat healthy foods. Some of the foods are:

1. *Milk Group*—cheese, butter, ice cream, yogurt
2. *Vegetable Group*—broccoli, lettuce, spinach, carrots
3. *Meat Group*—pork, steak, beef, beans
4. *Fruit Group*—apples, oranges, tangerines, cantelopes
5. *Bread Group*—bread, cereal, pasta, rice

Sticks & Stones Snacks



for school-aged children to make for everyone to eat

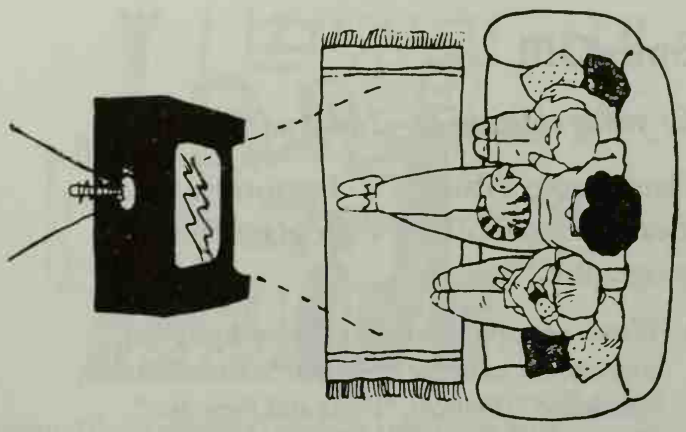
Each day, your child should eat foods from the 5 major food groups: bread, vegetable, fruit, milk, and meat. This snack covers "breads" and fruit.

1. Mix 4 cups of low sugar cereal (Kix, Cheerios, Chex), 2 cups of pretzels, and 2 cups of raisins in a mixing bowl.
2. Eat as a between meal snack.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Be Healthy and Fit,* U.S. Department of Education.

Learning Partners

Let's Use TV!



Television can be a very powerful learning tool. It is being used more and more in the classroom to inform students and stimulate discussion. Teachers often assign students to watch an educational television show as homework. Television can be used to add to what is being studied at school. As a parent, you can also use television to teach ideas and values that are important to you.

Here are some things you can do at home:

- Limit television viewing time. Remember that when children watch television it takes them away from other things such as homework, sports, and fun with friends and family.
- Monitor what your children watch. Encourage your children to choose programs that make them think, teach lessons, are free of violence and sex, and show characters who have values similar to yours.
- Watch television with your children. Ask questions: Why do you think that person did what he did? Would you have done the same thing?
- Suggest programs to watch that relate to what your child is studying.
- Have reference materials near the television so you can find additional information. Have your child look up new words in the dictionary. Look at an atlas to find places on the map.
- Use TV commercials to have a "mental" snack. Review what you have just watched and predict what will happen.
- Turn off the TV if you see things you don't like. Explain to your child why: "That program is scaring me. People don't act like that in real life. I don't like what those people are doing, because. . . "

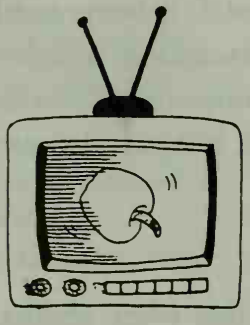
TV Activities

Spin Off!

for young children (K–2nd grade)

Plan a project using TV. Try some of these ideas that spin off a TV program and teach geography.

1. Watch a program that takes place in another country, for example, "Shalom Sesame" (Israel), "Madeline" (France), "Pride and Prejudice" (England), and "Carmen Sandiego" (the world).
2. Find the country on a map.
3. Read a story from the country.
4. Cook food from the country.



TV Math

for beginning students (1st–2nd grade)

Explain math using television.

1. Ask your child how you find a channel (channels are numbered). How would you punch in channel 32 on the remote control? Use this opportunity to explain the tens and ones columns in numbers.
2. Have your child look for numbers on television, in titles of programs, or in commercials for example.
3. Help your child develop an understanding of how long a period of time is, by comparing it to the length of television shows (1/2 hour, 1 hour, 2 hours).
4. Do simple math problems based on time. If you watch a two-hour mini-series for 3 nights, how many hours in all would you watch TV? If there are 6 commercials and each is 30 seconds, how many minutes of commercials will you watch in all?

Get the Scoop

for more advanced students (3rd–6th grade)

Help children understand that television is just one way to get information and that there are different ways to present the same information. This will help your child become a critical TV watcher *and* reader.

1. Watch the television news together.
2. Pick a news item to discuss.
3. Watch the same story on different channels. Talk about how different channels handle the story.
4. Find an article in the newspaper on the same topic and compare it to the television version. Is the newspaper story longer or shorter? Why?

Resources: Information was based on *Strong Families, Strong Schools,* "TV Viewing and Parental Guidance," and the *Helping Your Child* series of books for parents, U.S. Department of Education.

Learning Partners

Let's Do Art!

The visual arts (drawing, painting, printmaking, photography) enrich our lives and help children express their emotions. For preschoolers, doing artwork helps them get ready to read and write by developing visual and motor skills. Doing artwork gives older children the opportunity to get away from a desk and use different learning styles to explore beyond words and numbers.

Here are some things you can do at home:

- Keep simple art supplies around the house: scrap paper for drawing, old boxes to cut up for a cardboard "canvas" when using thicker paints or making posters, or pieces of cloth to do pasted up designs or patchwork. Limit pictures to 2 or 3 colors to save materials and to teach children about mixing colors and the different intensities of color (light and dark).
- Let your child express himself. A picture doesn't have to look like something you can recognize.
- Have your child talk about the picture to describe what it is supposed to be. This helps develop language skills.
- Encourage your child to make patterns of repeated colors and shapes. This helps develop an understanding of math.
- Have your child practice different techniques: drawing with lines, and shaping figures and designs with blocks of color, using contrasts of light against dark.
- Have your child make connections between artwork and other subjects. Look at and talk about book illustrations when you are reading together.
- Check art books out of the library and look at famous paintings. Talk about what is in the picture and how the artist painted it—did he use thick paint with bold strokes or did she use light colors with dots of paint?
- Display your child's art in your home.

Art Activities

Fingerpainting

for young children (pre-K–1st grade)

1. Use fingerpaint or make your own by mixing soap flakes in a bowl with a small amount of water. Beat the mixture with a fork and add powdered tempera paint or food coloring.
2. Spread out newspapers or a large piece of plastic on a table or on the floor.
3. Tape a big piece of paper on top.
4. Cover your child's clothes with a large old shirt or apron.
5. Have your child put the paint on the paper with her fingers.
6. Let your child express himself. Some children will use large, wide strokes, others will focus on small spaces.

Found Art

for beginning artists (K–5th grade)

Some artists create art from old junk, things they have found on the beach or even at dumps.

1. Go on a treasure hunt outside to find things that could be used in a collage, a picture where shapes and colors are pasted on a piece of paper or cardboard: sticks and leaves, flowers to be pressed, feathers, berries to be crushed to use as paint, pebbles, shells, pieces of blunt-edged metal.
2. Go on a treasure hunt inside to find other things such as scraps of paper, buttons, pieces of cloth, or ribbon.
3. Look for some heavy cardboard or wood to use as a backing.
4. Have your child lay out the materials in a design on the backing. Have your child move things around until the design is what she wants.
5. Using a heavy duty glue, have your child glue the items on the backing.

Post It!

for more advanced artists (3rd–6th grade)

1. Make a list of family safety tips. They might include: wash your hands before meals, walk don't run, always buckle your seat belt, wear your bicycle helmet, sit in your seat on the school bus, and make sure the water isn't too hot when you get in the shower.
2. Design a poster with one or more tips on it.
3. Think about what will catch a person's eye. Decide what lettering to use (type style), what colors to use, what pictures you want to have (graphics and illustrations), where you will put the lettering and pictures (layout) on the page.
4. Do a draft of the poster by drawing sketches and experimenting with lettering. Cut the sketches and letters out and move them around on a piece of paper to get the effect you want.
5. Draw, paint, or paste-up the final poster.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Get Ready for School,* U.S. Department of Education.

Learning Partners

Get Ready for School!

The road to success in school begins early. Good health, loving relationships, parental guidance and praise, and many opportunities to learn, all help children do well later in life. As a parent, you are the most important person in your child's life. Throughout the early learning years, you can do many simple things to help your children grow, develop, and have fun learning.

Here are some things you can do:

- Encourage your child to want to learn and go to school.
- Read aloud to your child daily. This gives your child a chance to learn about language, enjoy the sound of your voice, and be close to you.
- Set high standards for your children and encourage them to try new things.
- Listen to your child. This is the best way to learn what's on his mind, what he knows and doesn't know, and how he thinks and learns.
- Provide nutritious foods, safe places to play, regular medical care, and a regular sleep schedule for your child.
- Teach your child to get along with others, to share, and to take turns.
- Set a good example for your children. They will imitate what you do.
- Teach your child to feel good about herself and that she can succeed.
- Set limits for your child. This is a sign of love which your child appreciates, even if he or she may argue against them.
- Be generous with your praise. Always compliment your children for their efforts.

School Readiness Activities

Music Makers

for young children

1. Sing a lullaby to calm your child.
2. Let your child bang a spoon on pots, pans, or plastic bowls; shake a large rattle or plastic container filled with beans, buttons, or other noisy items; and blow through empty toilet paper or paper towel rolls.
3. Have your children take part in nursery rhymes. They can copy your hand movements, clap, or hum along.
4. Encourage your child to sway and dance to music.
5. Encourage your child to sing. Pick a simple melody such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

Scribble, Cut, and Paste

for children entering school

1. Scribbling, cutting, and pasting helps to develop motor skills, which will help children learn to write.
2. Scribble: Give your child different kinds of paper and writing materials to scribble with. Provide crayons, markers, or chalk that can be washed off.
3. Cut and Paste: Help your child learn how to use blunt-nosed scissors. Practice with your child and cut out different shapes from paper or pictures from magazines and newspapers. Paste these and other items, such as scraps of cloth, yarn, string, or cotton balls, to paper. You can make paste with flour and water or by using leftover egg white.

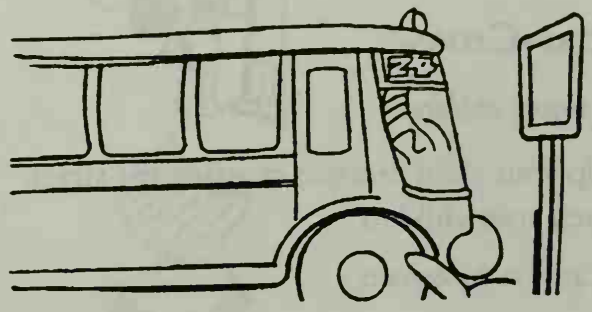
Getting Along

for children of any age

1. Let your children know that you are glad to be their parent. Give them personal attention and encouragement. Do fun things together.
2. Set a good example. Say "please" and "thank you." Have your child help you make cookies to welcome a new neighbor.
3. Help your child find ways to solve conflicts with siblings and friends. Teach your child that it's mean to gang up on one person.
4. Show your children you love them through hugs, kisses, an arm over the shoulder, or a pat on the back.
5. Teach your child to include brothers and sisters in neighborhood games.
6. Teach your child to look out for brothers, sisters, and other family members.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child Get Ready for School,* U.S. Department of Education.

Get to School Safely!

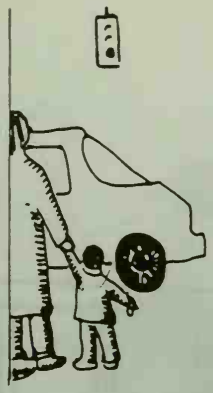


We all know that what children do in school is very important. But, getting to school is also important. Some children are lucky enough to live near the school, but others have to walk long distances, ride the school bus, or take public transportation. How can you help your child be safe on the way to school?

Here are some things you can do.

- If your child rides the bus or subway, tell your child to sit quietly in the seat. Children should follow the directions of the driver.
- Whether your child takes the school bus or a public bus, he or she should never play by the curb. At the subway, children should stand away from the platform edge.
- If your children walk to school, make sure they are with friends. They should walk on the main sidewalks and not take shortcuts through woods or empty lots.
- Teach your child how to cross the street. Make sure they know to follow the directions of the crossing guard or safety patrol.
- How ever they travel to school, teach your children not to talk to strangers.
- Give your children a whistle to blow if they are in danger. A whistle will attract attention and may ward off a crime.
- Make sure your child uses the seat belt if you drive to school, even if it's nearby. Remember that most accidents occur within 10 miles of home.
- If your child bikes to school, make sure he or she wears a helmet. Bikers should also wear bright, light colored clothing, and when it is getting dark, they should wear markers that reflect light.
- If your child fears other people he or she may meet on the way to school, help plan other routes for your child to take to school or talk with the school principal about this.

Safety Activities

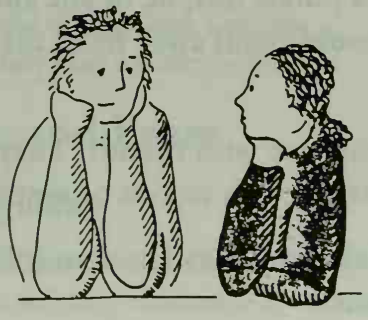


Criss-Cross

for young children

Help your child practice crossing the street. Teach your child to

1. Cross at the corner;
2. Look left, right, and left again before crossing;
3. Watch in particular for turning cars;
4. Stay in the crosswalks;
5. If there is a traffic light, cross only when the facing light is green or when the walk sign is on; and
6. Always follow the directions of the crossing guard or safety patrol.



Role Playing

for older children

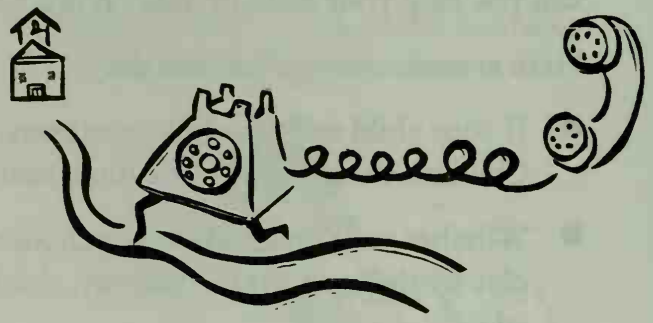
Although it may be hard for you, talk frankly with your children and teach them some common tricks of child molesters. You might want to play out these situations with your child. What do you do if:

1. Someone asks for directions and wants you to get into a car?
2. Someone asks for help in looking for a lost pet and leads you into an isolated area?
3. Someone asks to take your picture for a TV ad and invites you into their house or apartment?

Stay in Touch

for adults

1. Always call the school if your child will be absent. Make sure the school knows how to contact you if your child does not show up. Valuable time in looking for a lost child can be saved if there is quick contact between the school and a parent.
2. Tell your child how to contact you in a hurry. Give him your work phone number. Explain that she should leave detailed messages if there is an emergency. Teach your child how to call collect. Teach your child when and how to call 911.
3. Arrange for other parents to take your children in an emergency or if you are going to be late.



Resources: Information was based on "How To Keep Your Child in One Piece," U.S. Department of Transportation, and *Helping Your Child Be Healthy and Fit,* U.S. Department of Education.

Learning Partners

LET'S DO HOMEWORK!

Homework can help students learn and can help parents be involved in their children's education. When parents show an interest in their child's schoolwork, they teach an important lesson—that learning is fun and worth the effort.

Children who do more homework, on average, do better in school. And, as children move up through the grades, homework becomes even more important to school success.

Teachers assign homework for many reasons. It can help children

- practice what they have learned in school;
- get ready for the next day's class;
- use resources, such as libraries and encyclopedias; and
- learn things they don't have time to learn in school.

Homework can also help children learn good habits and attitudes. It can teach children to work by themselves and encourage discipline and responsibility.

A Checklist for Helping Your Child With Homework

Make Sure Your Child Has

- ✔ A quiet place to work with good light.
- ✔ A regular time each day for doing homework.
- ✔ Basic supplies, such as paper, pencils, pens, markers, and ruler.
- ✔ Aids to good organization, such as an assignment calendar, book bag, and folders.

Questions To Ask Your Child

- ✔ What's your assignment today?
- ✔ Is the assignment clear? (If not, suggest calling the school's homework hotline or a classmate.)
- ✔ When is it due?
- ✔ Do you need special resources (e.g., a trip to the library or access to a computer)?
- ✔ Do you need special supplies (e.g., graph paper or posterboard)?
- ✔ Have you started today's assignment? Finished it?
- ✔ Is it a longterm assignment (e.g., a term paper or science project)?
- ✔ For a major project, would it help to write out the steps or make a schedule?
- ✔ Would a practice test be useful?

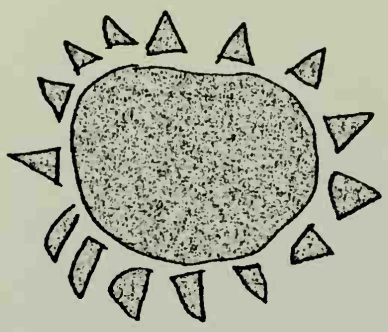
Other Ways To Help

- ✔ Look over your child's homework, but don't do the work!
- ✔ Meet the teachers early in the year and find out about homework policy.
- ✔ Review teacher comments on homework that has been returned and discuss with your child.
- ✔ Contact the teacher if there's a homework problem or need you can't resolve.
- ✔ Congratulate your child on a job well done.

Resources: Information was based on *Helping Your Child With Homework,* U.S. Department of Education.

*U.S. Government Printing Office: 1997 — 426-514

Other Resources



ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE)
and the National Parent Information Network (NPIN)

University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820–7469

Telephone: 1–800–583–4135
E-mail: ericeece@uiuc.edu

ERIC/EECE Web: http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/ericeece.html
NPIN Web: http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/npin/npinhome.html

Ready Web: http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/readyweb/readyweb.html
A resource on school readiness especially for parents and educators

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (ERIC EC)

1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 20191–1589

Telephone: 1–800–328–0272 (call M–F between 1–5 pm, Eastern Time)
E:-mail: ericec@cec.sped.org
Web: http://www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm

ERIC EC responds to requests for information on special/gifted education and produces publications on current research, programs, and practices. It provides information on topics such as Attention Deficit Disorder, gifted education, behavior disorders, inclusion, and learning disabilities.

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